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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Lone Star Defenders, A Chronicle of the Third Texas Cavalry, Ross' Brigade. By S. B. Barron of the Third Texas Cavalry. The Neale Publishing Company, New York and Washington, 1908. A complete facsimile from the press of W. M. Morrison, Waco, Texas, 1964. \$10.00.

The title of this book is the fanciful name chosen for themselves by members of Company C of the Third Texas Cavalry when it was organized in 1861. It seems a little strange now that the only two complete and sustained narratives of the exploits and experiences of the famous Confederate military unit known as Ross's Texas Brigade were written by members of the same regiment, but such is the case.

The account by Victor M. Rose of Company A was published in 1881, and in 1908 S. B. Barron published his recollections of the same actions and events. The author, first a third sergeant and later a lieutenant, was a member of Company C.

Since Barron wrote these recollections at the insistence of his family, one would expect them to be largely personal, as indeed they are. What he has to say about his adventures is what a father and grandfather would suppose to be interesting to members of his family. His narrative concerns what he saw, whom he met, what happened to him. He makes no attempt to explain strategy, nor does he concern himself with whys and wherefores of success and failure. *The Lone Star Defenders* is first of all S. B. Barron's story of the Civil War. The stories of the Third Texas Cavalry Regiment and of Ross's Texas Brigade are more or less incidental.

If one is especially interested in this gallant brigade or in the Civil War as it was fought south and west of Virginia, he might study Barron's story along with Victor Rose's book and Bearss's *Decision in Mississippi*. Taken together, the three give as fair and objective a picture of the brigade's part in the struggle as his emotions will allow.

The Morrison Press is to be commended for making available again Barron's rare book. This reviewer would have preferred a less complete facsimile, for the reprint of *The Lone Star Defenders*, like the original edition, has no index.

MRS. CHARLES MARTIN
Kirbyville, Texas

Heroes of Texas, Featuring Oil Portraits From The Summerfield G. Roberts Collection. Introduction by Evelyn Oppenheimer. Waco (Texian Press), Texas, 1964. 142 pp. Illustrations. \$10.

"They call me a folklorist, but I am not a scientific folklorist. After I have heard a good story, I do all I can to improve it." Thus in his Dedi-

cation to J. Frank Dobie does Paul A. Loftin quote the Venerable Southwesterner and inadvertently set a standard for the essayists who have contributed to this collection. Each of them is an accomplished author and they have written here about Texas' greatest heroes. As H. Bailey Carroll points out in his essay on David Crockett, "Texans have chosen to regard its defenders as heroes and, as such, have bestowed immortality upon them." And what can you do with immortals except retell the best known aspects of their careers? This much is ably and competently done by a galaxy of southwestern writers which includes, in addition to Carroll, James M. Day (Ben Milam), J. Frank Dobie (James Bowie), Joe B. Frantz (William Barret Travis), Llerena Friend (Sam Houston), Joseph Milton Nance (James W. Fannin), Ben Proctor (James Butler Bonham), Rupert N. Richardson (Stephen F. Austin), and Dorman H. Winfrey (Mirabeau B. Lamar). Each essay is preceded by a full page color portrait of the subject.

As is necessarily the case in collective efforts the quality of these essays varies. Dobie's is probably the most interesting and Frantz's is easily the most provocative, especially in his comments about how Travis came to be involved in the Texan's troubles. The essay on Crockett is less lively than the others and this is accentuated because he is traditionally the most human of this cast of characters. All are limited by their brevity and are not to be considered as biographies since they deal principally with the "Texas years" of these men, who, without exception, were originally from other states and territories. Probably they would not provide much introductory information but they are excellent reviews and are well worth while. Even after one has read a full biography such as Eugene Barker's life of Austin these essays will still be entertaining.

The selection of the nine subjects was made as long ago as 1917 when Maury Maverick, Sr. and Dewey Bradford were Sigma Chi fraternity brothers at the University of Texas. Lamenting that there was no central depository of Texas portraiture, they enjoyed the pleasant diversion of evaluating and selecting the nine men who they thought most deserved to be honored as a "Hero" and to have his portrait displayed in this official capacity. After much argument and agonizing sacrifice they settled on the nine who are presented here. Bradford later returned to the project with the idea that the portraits, when painted, should be historically accurate. That is, they should portray the subjects as they actually looked to contemporaries when they were performing the historical acts that we read about in narratives. Hair color, eye color and slant, nose formation, size of ears, build of physique, and countless other aspects were traced down through various sources. Portraits (many of them inaccurate), descriptions in letters, diaries and newspapers, and in the case of Houston who lived until the age of photography even crude pictures, were examined and evaluated. When this was done Charles B. Normann was contracted to do the actual painting. The original portraits are 24 x 28 inches and are presented in oval frames of pre-Civil War design of carved gum. Due to the generosity of their owner, Summerfield G. Roberts, a collector of Texas art objects, they are presently featured in the State Archives and Library Building in Austin. These portraits are the real heroes of this volume. Before they were placed in their permanent home they were

taken on a state-wide tour. For those who did not have the opportunity to view them then or who want to study them more closely, here is an excellent opportunity to indulge this form of appreciation. For all those who are interested in the revolutionary and republican era of Texas history, this will prove an arresting and enjoyable book. Since it is also the last book and the last project in which J. Frank Dobie had a part the dedication to him is not merely appropriate, it is hardly enough.

ARCHIE P. McDONALD

Stephen F. Austin State College

Orceneth Fisher. *Sketches of Texas in 1840 . . .* Waco, Texas: Reprint by the Texian Press, 1964. 64 pages.

Arthur Ikin. *Texas: Its History, Topography, Agriculture, Commerce, and General Statistics. To Which Is Added, A Copy of the Treaty of Commerce Entered Into by the Republic of Texas and Great Britain.* Waco, Texas: Reprint by the Texian Press, 1964. 100 pages.

George Bonnell. *Topographical Description of Texas. To Which Is Added, An Account of the Indian Tribes.* Waco, Texas: Reprint by the Texian Press, 1964. 150 pages.

Of interest to enthusiasts of Texas history should be three 1964 publications of the Texian Press which were originally published in 1840 and 1841. *Sketches of Texas in 1840* by Orceneth Fisher, who distinguished himself as the pastor of numerous East Texas Methodist churches, was published after the author had spent only one year in Texas. Despite his brief initial visit to the Republic, Fisher was able to include much valuable information in the work. The book contains a general description of the Republic's topography and discussions on the waters, towns, government, commercial advantages, religions, animals, and people of Texas. Of special interest to the East Texan would be Fisher's comments on the pines of that section, the intelligence and moral fiber of the young nation's citizens, and the best entry into Texas, which would take one to Rodney on the Mississippi, to Natchitoches, across the Sabine and on to San Augustine. Other topics of interest are also included in this book which was written by one quite impressed through his first visit to Texas.

George Ikin, the Texan Consul at London, was a British subject with both a personal and national interest in Texas. His work was designed to serve as an aid to potential immigrants to Texas and to England's merchants. As indicated in the title, the work has chapters on the history, topography, agriculture, commerce, and general statistics of Texas. Ikin acknowledged that his study was not as valuable as William Kennedy's *Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas*. This contention was correct, but as many did not have the leisure time to read Kennedy's more extensive study, it was this brevity that made Ikin's book beneficial. The book was written more from the perspective of an Englishman than a Texan, and one interested in the relations between England and Texas might find some of Ikin's opinions interesting.

George Bonnell, a soldier in the Texas Revolution and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs under Sam Houston, wrote the most important of these three studies. One hundred and sixteen pages of his book were devoted to the topography of Texas. The author approached the topic by describing the country surrounding the bays, rivers, and tributaries from Sabine Bay to the Rio Grande and northward to the Red River. *Topographical Description of Texas* also contained statements of advice to possible immigrants, comments on the government and the status of the free Negro in Texas, and a complete section on the Indians of Texas. Bonnell stated his opinions of the various Indian tribes and mentioned in limited detail various conflicts with the Indian.

Much of the information of these books can be located in more extensive studies, such as Kennedy's *Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas*. This, however, does not imply that the books do not have value to today's student of Texas and its history. All three books can give to the reader insight into the mind of yesterday and aid one in determining what type of literature helped lure settlers to Texas.

James M. Day, who wrote the introductions to each of the works, is to be commended for his brief but informative sketches of the authors. Too, by publishing these rare works (only three copies of Fisher's book and nine copies of Ikin's work are known to be in existence) the Texian Press has engaged in a public service and should be praised for such.

WILLIAM J. BROPHY

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